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New defibrillator outside M&S to give life-saving assistance

In a couple of weeks, people in the centre of Banbury will be able to use the town's first public access defibrillator, sited in Bridge Street; ambulance manager Dick Tracey, left

VITAL HELP IN A HEARTBEAT

Kieran Davey
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BANBURY'S first public access defibrillator should be available for use within the next two weeks.

The machine, which is costing £2,000, has been funded through the Banbury Lions Club and will be attached to the outside wall of Marks & Spencer in Bridge Street.

It is part of a drive by South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) commander Dick Tracey to install hundreds of the life-saving devices in public places.

His aim, backed by the *Banbury Cake*'s sister paper, the *Oxford Mail*, is to make sure no-one in Oxfordshire is ever more than 10 minutes from a defibrillator.

Mr Tracey said: "This defibrillator is so important for Banbury. We have lots of public access ones in rural places but it does not seem to be the case in bigger towns and cities.

"We believe if there is no life-saving treatment given from a defibrillator, the chances of saving a life reduce by about 10 per cent a minute.

"I hope it will be the first of many in the town."

The public access defibrillator is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, is not restricted by being inside a shop or other business, and is available for a member of the public to use.

The machine was meant to be opened before Christmas but there have been problems connecting electrical power to the device.

According to the South Central Ambulance Service there are currently nine defibrillators in Banbury.

This includes inside Banbury Police Station, Woodgreen Leisure Centre in Woodgreen Avenue, and at Windrush Surgery in West Bar Street.

But none of these are available 24 hours a day for members of the public to use.

Ian Wilson, from the Lions Club, said: "Marks & Spencer has been fantastic in helping us out, at a national and local level we found it hasn't really got involved with these kinds of causes before.

"We have had a few delays in the process but M&S has been supportive at all levels."

According to the Lions Club, a second defibrillator will be set up in the town later this year.

To use the system, people can call the 999 emergency number and will be directed to their nearest defibrillator.

Each box has an entry code, which will be given by the ambulance call-handlers so the equipment can be removed.

The call-handler will then stay on the phone and explain how to use the equipment until paramedics arrive.

Store manager at Marks & Spencer in Banbury, Rhys Bull, said: "Our position at the heart of Banbury's town centre makes our store the ideal location to install a public access defibrillator."

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Children's care homes to open

FOUR new children's homes in Oxfordshire are on track to open by the end of the year, it has been confirmed.

The care homes would provide places for 20 vulnerable children and teenagers, with the first two in Thame and Eynsham opening this summer.

At present the number of children placed outside of the county is 83, higher than the target of 70, a report to Oxfordshire County Council's performance scrutiny committee said.

Jim Leivers, director of children's services, said it was hoped the new care homes would remove the need for out-of-county placements.

He told the committee: "Our ambition would be to end the use of out-of-county placements, except in exceptional circumstances."

Speaking to the *Banbury Cake*, he added: "It is good news for children's social care in Oxfordshire and means the quality of service we can offer in-house will also improve."

Of the 83 children placed out of county, two are with parents, 12 with relatives or friends and two in independent living, according to the county council.

A further 37 are in care homes, 26 in foster care, two in specialist residential schools and two are in secure or youth offending services, which the council does not provide itself.

Last chance for primary places

FAMILIES with children who are due to start primary school in September have been reminded to apply for places.

The deadline for applications for children born between September 1, 2011, and August 31, 2012, is tomorrow.

Applications can be made online or by post and Oxfordshire County Council has advised parents to state three school preferences and include their catchment school as one, even if it is a third choice.

Last year, almost 90 per cent of children starting primary school in the county were offered their first preference.

The council's cabinet member for education, Melinda Tilley, said: "It's important that parents ensure they apply for a school place for their child on time, as this increases the chances we will be able to offer them a place at a school listed among their preferences.

"It's really important for anyone who has yet to submit an application to do so before time runs out."

To apply online, visit oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/admissions-primary-infant-and-junior-schools.

Postal application forms and information booklets are available from all Oxfordshire schools and nurseries and from reception in County Hall, Oxford.

Police vehicles deal

A NEW deal to buy police vehicles could save Thames Valley Police £140,000 over two years.

Police and Crime Commissioner Anthony Stansfeld said the deal would protect frontline policing.

Thames Valley, other police forces and fire services took part in the Chiltern Transport Consortium, the biggest vehicle procurement project in emergency services history.

In total, 34 organisations worked together to save more than £7m. They will order more than 3,000 vehicles over the next two years, with Thames Valley Police buying 274 of them.

Style Acre service users Dan Davenport and Rosemary Shooter, left, with SABRe manager Hannah Wolstenholme at the newly-opened bookshop

Charity's secondhand bookshop launches

New store gives adults with learning disabilities the chance to experience the world of work by helping to run the shop

John Craven officially opened Style Acre's Banbury base last year

Kieran Davey
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PEOPLE in Banbury with learning disabilities have the chance to experience the world of work as a second-hand bookshop opened in the town centre.

The Little Bookshop has been set up by Oxfordshire-based charity Style Acre, which support adults with learning disabilities by providing day services, work experience and job opportunities.

About 15 people a week will receive help through the shop in Butcher's Row, which sells a range of books including those specialising in fiction and history.

It was officially opened on Monday by BBC journalist and television presenter John Craven.

Managing the shop is Hannah Wolstenholme, who also runs the Style Acre Banbury Resource (SABRe) hub in Banbury.

Mrs Wolstenholme said: "The new bookshop will give the people we support the chance to work in a shop environment and the skills needed for retail.

"There are a lot of people who might want to work but find it a difficult thing to get into. What they are looking for is the chance to get the feelings of confidence and self-esteem and that is what we provide them with.

"Everyone has loved the idea so far and our service users have been very keen to check out all the donated books."

Roles offered to potential employees will include stacking shelves, helping customers, stock-taking and cashing up tills at the end of each day.

As well as those the charity helps, support workers will also be on hand to give help in running the bookshop. There will be about three shifts a day for people to gain experience.

Books have been donated by local people, friends and relatives of the charity's users and Banbury businesses.

The shop will also be selling hand-made items made at the SABRe hub, including bookmarks.

Kings Sutton resident Marianne Westhoff, a regular visitor to SABRe, will be one of those working at the shop.

She said: "I like being with people, and work experience makes me happy. I like the buzz of the workplace, it makes me feel warm inside. I get more confident as I learn new things."

Since opening in May last year, SABRe helps to support about 30 people with learning difficulties every week.

Councils plan new mergers

TWO more mergers of services have been proposed by Cherwell District Council with South Northamptonshire Council, in a bid to save almost £245,000 a year.

A report by Cherwell officers said the authorities could share a customer service team and a public protection service, which would include environmental health and enforcement against anti-social behaviour.

The plan is part of wider proposals for a "transformation programme" the two councils have been working on in their efforts to cut costs. A report to the joint commissioning committee estimates a customer service merger would save £61,000, of which £40,500 would be made by Cherwell.

One person had accepted redundancy, but others were expected to keep their jobs.

The director of operational delivery, Ian Davies, wrote: "The vision for this joint operation is an effective and high-performing customer contact team, who deal with as many customer queries from all council service areas as possible."

The public protection savings would cut the annual budget by £183,750 across both councils in a full year, with Cherwell saving £129,268. This would mainly be through removing vacant posts.

A consultations with staff and the Unison union took place in November and December. The plan will be discussed by the joint commission committee today at 6.30pm, at The Forum, Towcester.

Noise monitoring is a common environmental health team task

Jewellery stolen in big operation

JEWELLERY was stolen from seven homes in Banbury on one day in a single operation, police said.

Thieves broke into houses in Bloxham Road, Broughton Road and the Fairway between noon and 7pm on Monday, December 28.

Each home was in darkness when burglars smashed rear windows, drew curtains and searched the properties.

The raids were in the same week as 11 men carried out a raid on Goldsmiths Jewellers at Oxford's Clarendon Centre on New Year's Eve.

Sgt Jade Hewitt of Banbury CID said: "I would like to reassure all residents that a thorough investigation is under way to try and convict those responsible.

"We are also reminding residents to use timer lights, security lights and invest in extra security to protect their houses, and consider photographing and documenting valuables.

"We urge anyone with information to come forward as soon as possible. Any information, despite how trivial it may appear, could assist our investigation."

Health scrutiny body makes bid

A HEALTH watchdog is applying to become a charity by summer after Oxfordshire County Council proposed cutting £100,000 from its budget.

Healthwatch Oxfordshire warned it would not be able to carry out its role as the county's only independent scrutiniser of health and social care if the proposed cuts were imposed.

The council has announced £292m of cuts since 2011, but needs to save another £70m by 2020.

Healthwatch board members approved plans in November to seek charitable status so it could raise funding.

Business manager Carol Ball is now working to a target date of June 1.

Chief executive Rachel Coney said a cut of £100,000 would cripple the organisation's ability to stand up for patients and fight to improve services.

Responding to the proposed cut she said it would mean losing a third of its income and reduce its ability to listen to the views of patients and work with health leaders to improve care.

She warned that Healthwatch Oxfordshire would have to halve the time it spent speaking to the public, and would not be able to carry out surveys, work with charities and arrange events.

Fitness classes to benefit over-50s

PEOPLE who are aged over 50 and want to get fit in the new year can take up a new fitness programme in Banbury.

New weekday fitness classes will be held at the Woodgreen Leisure Centre, and include dance, yoga and pilates.

All classes will be available for £2.50 as part of the Go Active initiative, which encourages councils to create more sporting opportunities.

Cherwell District Council's deputy leader George Reynolds said: "These classes are specifically aimed at people over the age of 50 to enable them to work out alongside their peers in a fun and sociable environment.

"Through the Go Active initiative we are able to offer the classes at a reduced rate to make them even more affordable."

The classes include pilates on Monday from 9.30am to 10.20am, to improve balance, posture, strength and flexibility.

A new Fit 'n' Fifty class will run on Tuesdays from 9.15am to 10am and from 10am to 10.45am.

For details, call 01295 262742.

Village to become lorry 'rat-run', residents warn

Concerns over trucks' route in construction of high speed rail link

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Residents including, from left, parish council chairman George Page and HS2 sub-committee members Charlie Holbech, Malcolm Patterson, Bob Jarrett and Nigel Bankes on the busy A361, which winds through Wardington in sharp bends

RESIDENTS in a North Oxfordshire village have warned their home will become a "rat-run" if thousands of lorries are allowed to drive past every week as part of the HS2 project.

Wardington, four miles north of Banbury, is part of the proposed route for construction lorries travelling north to help build the new high speed rail link between London and Birmingham.

The A361 passes through the village, expected to carry vehicles travelling up from the M40 near Banbury.

Parish council vice-chairman Nigel Bankes has founded a HS2 campaign group, which is urging the Government to change the route for HGVs.

He said: "Not only will all the lorries clog up the main road, it will also block all the side roads from the A361. The area will just become a rat-run for vehicles.

"There is a safety aspect too. The pavements are very narrow and if people are walking there all it will take is a lorry to swerve and there'll be trouble.

"The noise and fumes caused by lorries will increase enormously and it will damage what is a really rural area.

"We don't see why they cannot use the train route, before the tracks are laid down, to be able to move the equipment and spoil."

The retired brewer added that at peak times more than 1,000 HGV lorry trips could be along the route every day.

HS2 vehicles would be able to use the route between 8am and 6pm on weekdays and 9am to 1pm on Saturdays.

But lorries carrying excavated material from the site would be allowed to use the road at any time.

Mr Bankes, 69, said: "People will not be able to get in or out of our village. It's a beautiful place and it will be shame if people can't visit."

The group is planning to raise its concerns at a HS2 select committee meeting in London on January 18.

Last week, Banbury MP Victoria Prentis said she was concerned about the effect the rail link's construction would have on communities, including Wardington.

She said: "There are a number of significant issues in the constituency, with several villages suffering acute problems, including noise, impacts on bridleway, and visual intrusion into unspoilt landscapes."

She added she was working alongside Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council to raise the issue with the Government.

Free water gadget offer to help families cut bills

Shower repairs can save money

THAMES Water is offering to fit free water gadgets that could save an Oxfordshire family of four as much as £180 a year on bills.

Smarter Home Visits involve an adviser going to customers' homes and fitting water efficient devices, such as showerheads, checking for leaky toilets and providing personalised advice about reducing household water usage – all free of charge.

Thames Water said people could still save without a water meter, as reducing hot water usage could help reduce energy bills.

The offer is available to anyone who is a Thames Water supply customer. For more information, call 0800 0433277.

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Cloudy2Clear service the Oxford, Banbury & Abingdon areas and James is finding that his approach is a major factor in his success. 'The truth is that it's not just the personal satisfaction that I get from doing a good job but also it makes good business sense. I get a huge amount of business from friends and family of people I've done work for, which just goes to show how much a little bit of effort is appreciated.'

So, if your windows are steamed up, broken or damaged give James a call for a free quotation on **0800 61 21 118** and he'll be happy to help!

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Prepare for flooding, residents put on alert

Councillors Neil Prestidge, left, and Maurice Billington assess Kidlington with residents Melvina Fawcett, Francesca Hailey, Nina Eage and son James

Pete Hughes
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Roads flood, sewers overflow and river levels continue to rise after a weekend of torrential rains across the county

PEOPLE were urged to make sure they were fully prepared for flooding this week, as rivers continued to rise across Oxfordshire.

Roads flooded across the county on Sunday, as sewers inundated with rainwater overflowed in Kidlington, South Hinksey and West Oxfordshire.

Fourteen areas across Oxfordshire remained on flood alert on Monday, following the weekend's torrential rain, meaning flooding was possible and people should be prepared.

But more serious flood warnings for the county were not issued.

The Thames, on flood alert throughout the whole of Oxfordshire, was recorded at a height of 3.5 metres in Oxford on Monday, about a metre higher than average.

Oxfordshire County Council leader Ian Hudspeth asked Thames Water to intervene after half of the the A4095 flooded near a pumping station at Long Hanborough.

He warned that rivers could continue to rise but said officers were keeping a close eye on levels.

He said: "The main issue is that when water falls on hillsides it takes a day or two to come down to lower areas.

"We may get some additional water, so we will look out for that."

He urged people to check on vulnerable or elderly neighbours to make sure they were prepared for the worst.

In South Hinksey, sewers overflowed on to Manor Road.

Resident Chris Jankiewicz said: "There's diluted sewage coming out, and eventually it runs into the Thames."

And people in Kidlington suffered days of flooding after a sewage pipe collapsed because of heavy rain.

Pavements were submerged under half a foot of water in Springfield Road, and fire crews and Thames Water staff helped people clear water from their driveways.

Oliver Silk, 20, who has lived in the road for 17 years, said the flood was "one of the worst" he could remember.

Stratfield Road, Grovelands and Lock Crescent were also flooded.

Nicola Blackwood, MP for Oxford West and Abingdon, visited the village and said: "We cannot have this keep happening for residents.

"We do not yet have a timetable going forward [for solving the problem] but this is something that is being done."

County council officers have been in liaison with the Environment Agency (EA) and stressed no property flooding was expected.

EA operations manager Peter Collins said it would take a "substantial amount of rain" this week for it to issue a flood warning, and said that was "not likely".

He said the Thames rose very slowly and his staff were keeping a closer eye on some of its tributaries such as the Bullstake Stream in Oxford.

The county council cabinet member for flooding, Rodney Rose, said: "Our emergency planning, fire and rescue, highways and other teams have been in a state of readiness to respond to potential flooding issues."

Thames Water said: "The weekend's heavy rainfall has not had a significant impact on our sewers in Oxfordshire, however in some areas where high volumes of rain water have entered the network of pipes we're using tankers to remove the excess water."

No plan yet for drone policing

THAMES Valley Police is reserving judgment about using drones in burglary investigations and high-risk operations until national trials have been concluded.

The remote-control devices have also been suggested for protests and missing person searches after senior officers decided they could be a viable alternative to helicopters.

National guidelines for the use of drones have been issued following trials in Surrey and Sussex.

More than a quarter of the nation's 43 forces are now considering drones, but Thames Valley has not decided on any "potential benefit" and issues surrounding their use.

Spokeswoman Hannah Jones said: "The force will take a view once the potential benefit and associated issues have been identified at a national level."

Steve Barry, the Association of Chief Police Officers lead on drones, who is also Assistant Chief Constable of Sussex Police, said drones could be "efficient and effective" and could be used in burglary investigations by officers searching for suspects in backyards.

He added that drones could also be used in sieges and said: "You could send up the drone and use the videolink before making a decision how to proceed."

School reading charity success

THE work of Oxfordshire children's reading charity ARCh has been given a thumbs-up by schools throughout the county in its 2015 Pupil Survey.

More than 100 primary schools were invited to respond to ARCh's annual survey, which measures the impact that providing one-to-one assistance from a trained volunteer reader can have on a pupil's reading and their wider school performance.

The development manager of the Bicester-based charity, Elaine Adams, said: "Schools reported that 92 per cent of pupils who participated in our assisted reading scheme in 2015 showed a marked improvement in reading and writing, coupled with a valuable uplift in concentration and self-confidence.

"The findings are a fantastic reward for the work of our army of volunteer reading helpers, who regularly mentor over 700 Oxfordshire schoolchildren between the ages of six and 11."

The results of the ARCh Pupil Survey were analysed by Research Oxford.

There are still spaces available on a new volunteer training course for anyone wanting to join ARCh.

Contact info@archoxfordshire.org.uk for details of the sessions on January 19 and 20.

Time to honour your saviour first aiders

PEOPLE are being urged to vote for health heroes who have saved lives.

St John Ambulance has launched its annual Everyday Heroes awards to celebrate inspiring stories of first aid heroism.

The charity wants people to tell them about relatives, friends, colleagues or strangers who have saved lives or championed first aid.

The charity's South East regional director, Mark Farmer, said: "Each year we hear incredibly inspiring stories of ordinary people who have done extraordinary things."

Entries close at 5pm on March 24. See sja.org.uk/everydayheroes

Mayor helper gets medal

A CIVIC officer from Banbury will be given a British Empire Medal (BEM) for services to local government.

Tricia Campbell has spent 23 years working to uphold the town's civic traditions. She started off as a secretary to Banbury's Charter Trustees, which organised mayoralty and civic events for the town until 2000.

Later she became the town's civic officer as part of the newly-formed Banbury Town Council.

The 64-year-old, who lives with her husband, Robert, and has three children, received the award as part of the Queen's New Year's Honours.

She said: "I am both honoured and proud to be given this award, but feel totally embarrassed as I have just been doing my job, albeit one that I absolutely love.

"For the last 23 years, working for the town mayors of Banbury has brought me into contact with an amazing range of people and I feel very fortunate that I have been able to work alongside councillors and Banbury Town Council staff."

Her role includes organising civic events including Remembrance Sunday, the Christmas Concert, and Canal Day.

Town mayor Tony Mepham said: "I am the latest in a long line of mayors who have relied on Tricia during our terms in office.

"We appreciate what she does. Many charities and good causes have reason to be grateful to her."

Tricia Campbell gets a BEM award

Conservationists get together to rejuvenate an overgrown woodland footpath

VOLUNTEERS from around the county got their hands dirty clearing a patch of greenery in Deddington this weekend.

About 10 members of Oxfordshire Conservation Volunteers (OCV) took part in coppicing work in the woodland behind the Windmill Centre, Hempton Road.

Bundles of hazel binders for hedgerowing were hefted across the site by Phil Hunter, who had travelled up from Oxford for the day's activities.

Mr Hunter, 53, said: "One thing we were doing was harvesting hazel for hedgerowing. It also helps to thin out the woodland and rejuvenate the wood.

"The parish council asked us to clear one of the footpaths alongside the playing fields that were overgrown."

A group from OCV last visited the site four to five years ago and the organisation's energies have recently been focused on rebuilding the old stone wall at Deddington Castle.

The project is scheduled to be finished in the summer.

Bird boxes were due to be installed near the Windmill Centre on Sunday, but volunteers decided to postpone the work so they could discuss the best way to attach them to trees.

For information on OCV, or to get involved, visit ocv.org.uk

Phil Hunter, a member of the Oxfordshire Conservation Volunteers, carries a bundle of hazel binders for use in hedge laying in Deddington

Area proposal rejected

Neighbourhood plan is dismissed by councillors

Kieran Davey
kdavey@nqo.com

A NEW neighbourhood plan for Bodicote has been rejected by councillors because some of the land included will soon become part of Banbury.

The application would mean the parish council could develop its own planning policies.

But from April, land east of Oxford Road, including part of the new Longford Park development, and some homes in the Wykham Farm area will be taken over by Banbury Town Council.

A revised proposal for the neighbourhood plan will now be submitted to the district council.

Cherwell District Council's lead member for planning, Michael Gibbard, said: "Neighbourhood plans are driven by parish communities and aim to allow them to develop their own planning policies. Cherwell District Council will support parish councils as they prepare their plans and guide them through the process.

"Whilst Cherwell supports the proposal for a Bodicote neighbourhood plan, it does not believe that the area put forward in the plan is appropriate as it covers the whole of the existing Bodicote Parish Council area.

"We refused this as we believe that a more appropriate area should be designated. We have therefore approved the designation of a revised alternative area for the preparation of a Bodicote neighbourhood plan."

Cherwell currently has eight neighbourhood plans; Adderbury, Bloxham, Deddington, Hook Norton, Merton, Stratton Audley, Weston on the Green and the multi-parished area of "Mid-Cherwell".

Sex offender

OXON: A 20-year-old man who admitted sexual activity with a child in Banbury has been locked up.

Scott Friday, of Alexandra Road, Plymouth, was sentenced to 15 months in a young offenders' institution at Oxford Crown Court last Thursday.

The charges related to one girl, then 14, which took place in the town between May 2 and 5, 2014.

He was ordered to pay a victim surcharge, sign the sex offenders' register and was made subject to a 10-year sexual harm prevention order.

4G coverage

BANBURY: Vodafone UK has started to roll out its 4G network in the town.

It means customers with compatible devices will be able to connect to the internet more quickly, more reliably and in more places than before.

The company has spent about £2 billion on its network and services over the last two years.

More than 700 cities, towns and districts have received 4G coverage so far.

Police awards

OXON: The county's residents are being asked to put forward their nominations for Thames Valley Police's Community Policing Awards 2016.

Nominations for the awards opened yesterday before the ceremony, which will be hosted at Eynsham Hall in mid May.

There are seven categories this year, including community police officer, special constable, volunteer, diversity champion and victim support award.

The deadline for nominations is February 22.

To nominate someone for the awards, visit http://bit.ly/1PnAlrw.

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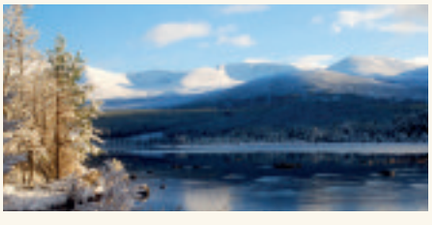

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Fears over quantity of spring vegetables, plus upheaval for wildlife as hotter climate confuses nature

Bigger gains for small producers

Pete Hughes
phughes@nqo.com

THE bigger they come, the harder they fall and some of those worst hit by this winter's record-breaking warmth might be among the biggest players in the game.

For years, the biggest corporate farms in the industry have been moving towards monoculture; farming the largest possible area with a single crop and reaping huge economies of scale.

But that also means if you have a bad winter for your one crop, you have a bad winter for your whole business.

However, in the past decade, a new type of farmer has emerged: independent smallholders who try to farm small batches of many different crops.

One example is Oxfordshire farming co-operative Cultivate, which manages a small plot of land at Little Wittenham near Didcot.

Like all farms, they have been hit by the unprecedented warm and wet winter and their yields are down significantly.

But because they grow so many different crops, the business can be propped up by those crops that have survived.

Operations manager Jack Lawson explains: "Yields are down quite significantly. It was a very wet year and that hampered a lot of growth. But half of what we grow is in polytunnels, so we can regulate that more closely. Those plants are safe."

The plants that were hit are the unprotected winter vegetables growing outdoors: cabbages, kale, fennel and parsley.

Like much of Oxfordshire, the soil at Little Wittenham is quite damp anyway, so a lot of extra rain is unlikely to be helpful.

"A lot of farmers in Oxfordshire grow squash in autumn, and if they get wet they just rot in the ground," says Mr Lawson, 26.

"A couple of farmers I know had maybe half the quantity they were expecting because of that.

"Overall, I'd say the weather in December has been bad news. Unpredictability is not a good thing in farming. You need to have a very good idea of what plants you should put in the ground.

"The flexibility we have as a small grower means if one crop doesn't do so well we can rely on the others."

Cultivate are not the only ones doing well after the warmest December on record. West Oxfordshire dairy farmer Tim Hook's cows have been snug all winter and are now milking "very well" he says.

Like all other farmers, Tim Hook doesn't want to count his chickens before they hatch.

He said: "We're only halfway through the winter. February could still be an iron month, and that would change everything again."

The Earth Trust operations manager Jack Lawson checks its crops

Effect of last winter on crops

Daffodils were already out around the county during mid-December

HIS cauliflowers are three months early, his spring onions four months ahead and his cabbages are going to seed.

Iain Tolhurst has been running Tolhurst organics in South Oxfordshire for 40 years, but he has never seen a winter like this.

Last month was the warmest December in UK history, and the wettest calendar month since records began in 1910.

"It's had an effect on cauliflowers, winter cabbages, sprouting broccoli; things which would normally stay in the field and not be harvested until May or April we're harvesting now.

"These are breeds which are programmed to start to produce a crop in March and they've been doing that since I started in farming in 1976. You can get crops two weeks ahead but this is unprecedented."

Almost all plants and animals rely on cues in temperature change to tell them when to go dormant or hibernate: it is an adaptation which stops them from wasting resources trying to survive in the coldest and most hostile months of the year.

If it doesn't get cold, plants don't "know" that winter is here, and won't go dormant.

As Mr Tolhurst puts it: "Plants have been fooled into thinking spring is about to emerge. It's the same with wildflowers like primroses and daffodils."

Farming co-operative Cultivate are selling the veg to help him get rid of his glut.

But the long-term picture is less rosy: "We are going to be very short of produce by the end of February."

Here's the buzz about the effects of our warm winter on bees

GEORGE Fenemore's bees are very confused.

Mr Fenemore, who rears sheep at Home Farm near Deddington, also keeps 100 hives of bees to sell their honey.

But he and his bees have never seen a winter like this before.

He explains: "Normally when the temperature starts to drop we close up the hives and the bees go into a semi-torpor state.

"This year we had bees flying on Christmas Day, but there's no nectar or pollen for them which means they're using up their reserves at a vast rate."

Normally his queens would also be hibernating all winter long then wake up in spring and start to produce their offspring.

Farmer George Fenemore, of Home Farm, has bees

This year his queens are already producing their brood in January, which means even more mouths to feed.

In order to stop his bees from starving, Mr Fenemore has had to keep them fed with a homemade sugar syrup all winter, which he makes by melting granulated sugar.

It is a small extra cost on a large farm, but he says it is another worry on a long list.

The flip-side of all this confusion is that normally a beekeeper would fully expect some of his colonies to freeze to death over the winter.

That, at least, will not be a worry at Home Farm this year.

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BLAZE TREATED AS ARSON

BANBURY: A fire which destroyed four garages is being treated as arson, police have said.

Firefighters were called to Evenlode just after midnight last Thursday, where seven single-storey garages were on fire. A car was also destroyed.

Police spokeswoman Connie Primmer confirmed Thames Valley officers were called at 12.40am. She said there was no-one inside and an investigation had begun.

Residents take advantage of bin sale

MORE than 450 Cherwell residents have taken advantage of the district council's annual recycling bin sale, as they got rid of wrapping paper and Christmas cards.

The price of blue and brown recycling bins was cut to £10 each, a saving of up to £8 on the usual price.

A total of 303 blue and149 brown bins were sold, giving two million extra litres of recycling space each year.

The council's lead member for clean and green, Debbie Pickford, said: "Over the festive period, households generate a lot of extra waste ranging from Christmas wrapping and packaging to food containers and leftovers.

"The bin sale coincides with this as it is the time of year when people are most likely to think about the need for additional recycling capacity. However, by taking advantage of the discounted bins at Christmas residents can enjoy extra recycling space all year round."

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Aid effort as floods hit North

Flood Friends and helpers, from left, Elaine Bryant, Brian Reynolds, Hazel Ashall and Melanie Cox with Mel Deamer

Town volunteers wave off two lorry loads of aid for deluge victims

Kieran Davey
kdavey@nqo.com

A BANBURY man has thanked the public for their generosity in donating supplies to people affected by the floods.

Melvin Deamer set up the Banbury Flood Friends group over Christmas after seeing the impact of the flooding on television.

He put an appeal on Facebook asking people to donate furniture, clothes and supplies, and unexpectedly received a huge response.

Last Friday, Mr Deamer and other group members waved off two seven-and-a-half-tonne lorries to take the donations to Yorkshire.

The 35-year-old said: "I saw people struggling up north and I know what it feels like to be at the bottom of things. It's not nice.

"You can see children and elderly people in trouble – people we need to help."

Since launching the appeal on December 29, the group, which includes Mr Deamer's partner Hazel Ashall, have collected 20 sofas and 30 beach chairs.

Other items include dog food, tumble dryers, clothes and even a guinea pig hut.

The group is also led by Elaine Bryant and Mel Taylor, both of Banbury, who volunteered to help.

The Grimsbury man, a self-employed computer repairman, said: "We've found that people are more than happy to donate when asked. People said we should stop asking but I want to carry on and collect as much as possible.

"Local people have been so generous and I thank everyone who donated."

Donations are stored at Wildmere Industrial Estate in Wildmere Road, after company Storagebase opened up space in their unit.

Banbury kitchen manufacturer Unitech Oxon lent a lorry to join one already borrowed from Banbury Van Hire.

The group hopes to take up more donations next week if they have a van available.

They seek humidifiers and pressure washers which can clear water from homes.

Vast areas of northern England and Scotland have been severely affected by the flooding.

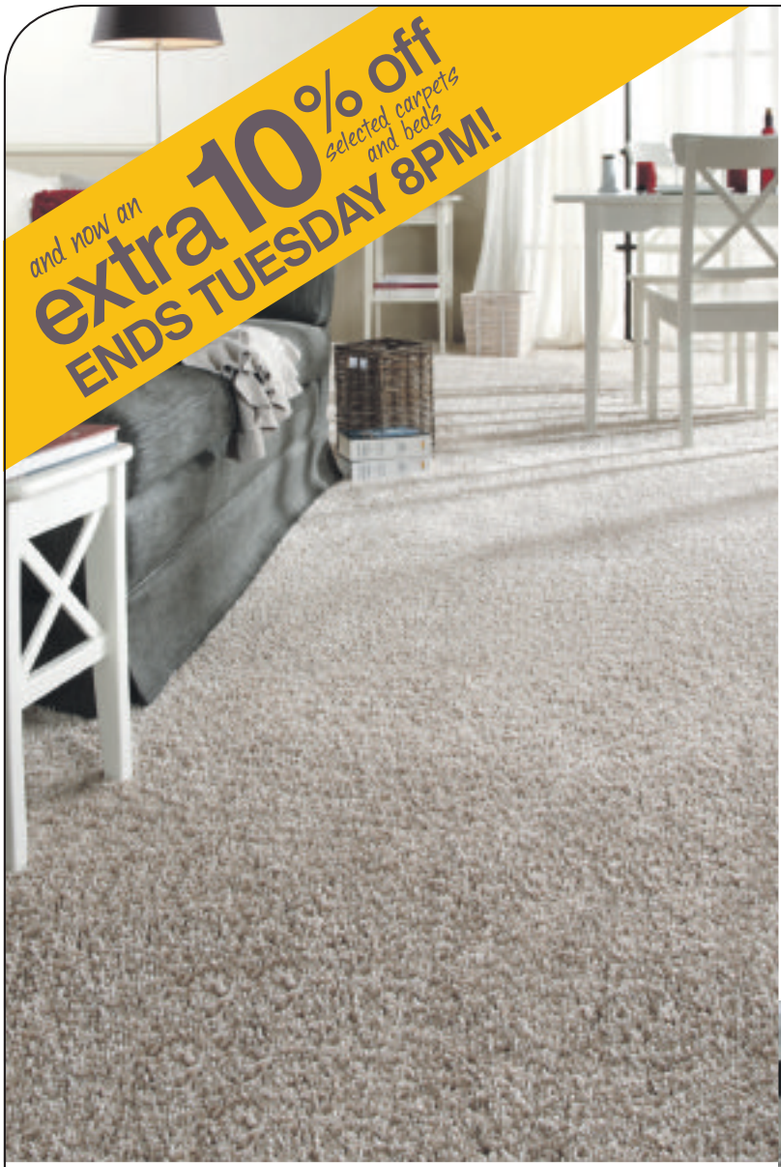
FUGITIVE CAPTURED AFTER TWO MONTHS ON THE RUN

A WANTED man, on the run from police for two months, has been found.

Andre Parker, also known as Andre Hurst, 27, was found last Thursday.

Parker, who was last seen in Banbury town centre on November 8, was wanted on recall to prison for breaching the conditions of his licence.

Officers had revealed Parker had links to Banbury, Oxford and Norfolk, but not where he was found or what crime he was convicted of.



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Oxfordshire Listings

THURSDAY

Trees talk: Ridgeway Community Church Centre, Wood Street, Wallingford. At the January meeting of Wallingford Gardening Club, Richard Roslyn, head gardener at Blewbury Manor, will give a talk entitled *Trees: A Camera's Perspective*. He will describe the aesthetic beauty of trees, both native and exotic, and the role they play in our gardens. 7.30pm. Visitors £2. 01491 836867.

Robert Strange: The Harwell artist is staging an exhibition at Cornerstone Arts Centre, 25 Station Road, Didcot, based on his fascination with ordinary objects. From dice to plastic cracker toys, this playful and colourful exhibition features detailed drawings alongside paintings, prints and photographs of everyday familiar items that we regularly use and throw away. Opening times: Tuesday-Saturday 10am-6pm, Sunday 11am-4pm, closed Monday. Free.

Sustainability debate: The Mix Community Space, 15 Mill Street, Wantage. Films on climate change from around the world, plus discussion. 7.30pm. Free. 07768 767787.

Abingdon Young Farmers: Manor Farm, Marcham. An organisation for young people from all walks of life with an interest in the countryside. It has a range of social and sporting events, talks and visits to local places of interest. 7.45pm. £35-£40 per year.

FRIDAY

Abingdon Farmers' Market: Market Place, Abingdon. Variety of stalls selling locally-sourced produce. 8.30am. 01235 227266.

SATURDAY

Bring and buy: The Activities Room, Fernleigh, Station Lane, Witney. Witney Refugee Action is asking for donations of unwanted Christmas gifts for its fundraising sale. Tea, coffee and cake will be available. 10am. Free admission. Bring items to donate from 9.30am or advance by calling 01993 775096.

Table-top and jumble sale: Island Farm Donkey Sanctuary, Old Didcot Road, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell. Varied stalls, good parking and refreshments. 11am. 50p. Set-up for sellers from 10am, pitches available from £6 (tables supplied) – booking is recommended on 01491 833938.

Grand sale: Village hall, Castle Road, Wootton, near Woodstock. Grand sale of jumble and bric-a-brac to raise funds for the village primary school, as well as bargains for all the family. Refreshments available. 3pm. 20p admission. 01993 812423.

Introduction to hedgelaying: Earth Trust, Little Wittenham. A very practical, hands-on two days laying a Midland-style hedge with expert Clive Leeke. Learn about this traditional skill on the job at the Earth Trust's nature reserve in Little Wittenham. All specialist tools and equipment provided. 9.30am-4pm on Saturday and Sunday. Booking is essential via 01865 407792.

Circular walk: Meet at the church, Stoke Lyne, ref. SP566283, at 10am. A leisurely five-mile circular via Bainton led by Lionel Howse, of Bicester & Kidlington Ramblers. 07527 758788.

Winter birds walk: Bring binoculars or telescope for a two-hour walk led by Ruth Ashcroft and Anthony Cheke, when, it is hoped, people will see a variety of ducks, geese and waders on the meadow flood water. Wear waterproof boots or sturdy walking shoes. Meet at the car park by the entrance to Port Meadow, at the bottom of Walton Well Road, Oxford, at 10am. Free. 01865 248344.

Papier mâché crafts: The Mix Community Space, 15 Mill Street, Wantage. Give all those pieces of wrapping paper new life as a bowl and keep a bit of Christmas sparkle with you throughout the year. 10.30am. £4. To book a place, contact Jo on 07768 767787.

Ambulance service recruitment day: South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust, 7-8 Talisman Road, Bicester. People interested in becoming a paramedic, want to work in a call centre or are looking for a driving position are invited to find out more about full- and part-time positions available with SCAS. There will be tours, talks and demonstrations, plus the chance to speak to staff. 10am.

Stargazing: Denys Wilkinson Building, Keble Road, Oxford. Explore the universe with Oxford Physics, through talks and hands-on activities. 2-10pm. Free. More information at www2.physics.ox.ac.uk/events/2016/01/16/stargazing-oxford-2016

SUNDAY

Bingo: Westcott Sports and Social Club, Ashendon Road, Westcott. Doors open at 7pm, book sales close at 7.50pm, eyes down at 8pm. £7 for books. There will also be a raffle. 01296 651855.

MONDAY

Mosaic workshop: Lechlade Craft Barn, Orchard House, South Downington, Lechlade. Learn the techniques of mosaic making using tiles, glass, vintage china, old jewellery and quirky items. Make a wall plaque or decorative mirror creating your unique design. Tools and materials, plus drinks provided. Please bring your own lunch. Building is not suitable for anyone with mobility issues. £45. To book, email karen@lechladecraftbarn.com or call Karen on 07974 081526 or 01367 253116.

Historical talk: Long Furlong Community Centre, Boulter Drive, Abingdon. Shaun Morley, a part-time tutor at Oxford University, will give a talk on custom and ritual in 19th-century Oxfordshire. It is hosted by the Vale of the White Horse branch of Berkshire Family History Society. 7.30pm. 07851 206313.

TUESDAY

Café Scientifique: Café bar, Cornerstone Arts Centre, Station Road, Didcot. Relaxed forum for debating science issues, run by Didcot First. There will be a 20-minute talk, followed by a break and then a discussion. For ages 16 and above. Free. 7.30pm.

WEDNESDAY

Swishing party: The Mix Community Space, 15 Mill Street, Wantage. Chance to swap clothes. Drop off any unwanted clothes for youngsters aged up to five to Becky (07823 885492) by January 18. 7.30pm. £2 entry, cupcakes on arrival.

Egyptian treasures: Trinity Church, Conduit Road, Abingdon. Lucia Gahlin will be giving Abingdon Decorative and Fine Arts Society's January lecture on Ancient Egyptian treasures in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. 2pm. Non-members £6. Free coffee and tea before the lecture. For further details. see adfas.org.uk

To get an event of any kind listed here, enter the details into our easy-to-use online database at thisisoxfordshire.co.uk/events

Please add your event no later than ten days before the day of publication.

WEDNESDAY

Charlbury WI: Cornbury Room, behind The Bell, Charlbury. The first meeting of the year will be a beetle drive. Charlbury WI meets at 7.30pm on the third Wednesday of the month.

Film

THURSDAY

Butcher Boy (15): Abingdon Health and Wellbeing Centre, Audlett Drive, Abingdon. Arguably director Neil Jordan's best film, the story is centred on two youths, Francie and Joe, who get up to mischief as a relief from their troubled family lives, with a chilling conclusion. The cast includes Stephen Rea and Aisling O'Sullivan as Francie's parents. Screening organised by Abingdon College and District Film Society. 7.45pm. £6. 01235 521976.

TUESDAY

Mr Holmes (PG): The Mill Arts Centre, Banbury. Ian McKellen plays Sherlock Holmes, in retirement in Sussex, who, frustrated by the misrepresentation of him in Watson's best-selling novels, diverts his attention to an unsolved case. 2pm. £6, concessions £4. 01295 279002.

Comedy

FRIDAY

Stewart Lee: Oxford Playhouse, Beaumont Street, Oxford. The comedian returns with fresh material in preparation for his next BBC2 series of *Stewart Lee's Comedy Vehicle*. 8pm. £21. 01865 305305.

Dance

THURSDAY

Sequence/ballroom dancing: Witney Folk Dance Group: Madley Park Hall, Northfield Farm Lane, Witney. Learn English country dances. 8pm. £3. Includes raffle and coffee. 01993 705961.

SATURDAY

Jacqui Faye: Woodstock Social Club, 44 Oxford Street, Woodstock. Live music and dancing. 8.30pm. Free entry, but donations welcomed. 01993 812094.

TUESDAY

Tea dance: Woodstock Social Club, 44 Oxford Street, Woodstock. Enjoy a dance or just a chat with friendly crowd. Entrance includes tea/coffee and cake. 2pm. £2. 01993 812094.

Music

FRIDAY

Didcot Red Hot Blues Club: Great Western Staff Association Club, Station Road, Didcot. The Teddy White Band will be playing. 8.30pm. £5 on the door.

SATURDAY

Memories of Flanders and Swann: St Peter's Church, Upper Wolvercote, First Turn, Wolvercote. Former MP Michael Mates and composer/musician William Godfree will present their acclaimed show, performing classic songs created by Flanders and Swann, including *The Hippopotamus*, *The Gnu*, *Transport of Delight* and *The Gasman Cometh*. Proceeds to St Peter's Church's organ appeal. 7.30pm. £15, concessions £12. Tickets from ticketsoxford.com or 01865 512258.

Gary Benjafield: Westcott Sports and Social Club, Ashendon Road, Westcott. Music from all eras to get the audience out of their seats and on to that dance floor. There will be a bingo and a raffle. 7.30pm. Members £5, non-members £7. 01296 651855.

Chairman's charity concert: Cornerstone Arts Centre, 25 Station Road, Didcot. Cornerstone is again hosting the chairman of South Oxfordshire District Council's inaugural event of the year, in support of Dementia UK and The Rainbow Trust. A 18-piece orchestra will play the big band music of Glenn Miller, Count Basie, Benny Goodman and many more. The concert will be compered by Bill Rennells, of BBC Radio Oxford. 7.30pm. Adults £15, concessions £13.50. 01235 515144.

Banbury Soul Club: Banbury Trades and Labour Club (use side entrance), West Bar Street, Banbury. Motown and Northern Soul classics will be played on original vinyl records by resident DJs. 8pm. £5 on the door. 07528 285977.

SATURDAY

Steve Ashall: Littlebury Hotel, Kings End, Bicester. Covers from 60s to 90s. 9pm. Free entry. 07941 416722.

MONDAY

Fresh Dixie: The Bullingdon, 162 Cowley Road, Oxford. Gig by one of the UK's most exciting cross-over jazz artists. 7pm. £5. 01865 244516.

TUESDAY

Johnny Cash tribute: New Theatre, Oxford. Clive John portrays the country singer and Jill Schoonjans is June Carter, aiming to capture the essence of what it was like to be at a real Cash show. They will perform songs from the 1950s right up to 2002, including *Ring of Fire*, *Walk the Line* as well as the Johnny and June duets *Jackson* and *If I Were a Carpenter*. 7.30pm. £18-£25 from atgtickets.com/oxford

WEDNESDAY

The Remi Harris Trio: The Comrades Club, Newbury Street, Wantage. 'Zelda's Jazz Room' presents this gig by the trio, who will be joined by saxophonist/clarinetist John Hallam. 8pm. £10. Licensed bar and raffle. Fish and chip supper available at £4 (order by 8pm). 01235 765648.

Carmen: Oxford Playhouse, Beaumont Street, Oxford. The OperaUpClose company will perform their smash-hit English language production of Bizet's popular opera. In the classic story, sparks fly when Carmen meets José, but as her passion cools, his turns to obsession. Unable to control his feelings or the woman who inspired them, he descends into violence. 7.30pm. £11.50-£22. 01865 305305.

Theatre

THURSDAY

Gangsta Granny: New Theatre, Oxford. National tour of the stage adaptation of David Walliams's popular children's book. In the story, Ben is expecting a boring time staying with Granny but what he does not know is that she has a secret, and Friday nights are about to get more exciting than he could possibly imagine. Until Saturday. 7pm plus matinées. Tickets £21.50-£28.50 from atgtickets.com/oxford

FRIDAY

Rapunzel: Corn Exchange, Market Place, Wallingford. Theatre-goers of all ages are set to be captivated by this traditional pantomime about how a handsome prince rescues his beloved from her lofty prison cell by climbing up her long hair to reach her. But the path of true love never runs smooth and he must overcome prickly obstacles to achieve his goal. On the way, there will be a range of colourful characters including witches, a dancing robin, silly gnomes, ghosts, courtiers and pretty fairies. Performances run until January 30 (no shows on Sundays or Mondays) with Saturday matinee at 2.30. Adults £12, concessions £10, children £6. Tickets from cornexchange.org.uk or 01491 825000.

Cinderella: Wykham Theatre, Banbury Academy, Ruskin Road, Banbury. Banbury's only professional theatre group, Cherwell Theatre Company, stages its new version of *Cinderella*. It will be the 11th festive production for this group of thespians, which combines professional and young actors. Performances are Friday at 7.30pm, Saturday at 2.30pm and 7.30pm, and Sunday at 1.30pm. £10, concessions £8, family ticket £32. To book tickets, call 0845 6801926 or visit cherwelltheatrecompany.co.uk

Little Red and the Wolves: The Pine Lodge, Thame Road, Little Milton. The Proteus Theatre Group presents its new play, a haunting, contemporary version of the classic *Little Red Riding Hood* tale. 6.30pm. Adults £8, children £5. Tickets available at Little Milton Post Office or wegottickets.com

SATURDAY

The Picture of Dorian Gray: The Mill Arts Centre, Banbury. A new adaptation of Oscar Wilde's only novel coincides with the 125th anniversary of its publication. Set in the decadent world of Victorian London, a handsome and narcissistic young man, Dorian Gray, becomes infatuated by the exquisite portrait that an artist has painted of him. He makes a Faustian pact that he will remain forever young while the picture grows old. 7.30pm. Adults £14, concessions £12.

MONDAY

Col Chris Hadfield: New Theatre, Oxford. The most famous astronaut since Neil Armstrong, will give a live presentation featuring his account of his five months living on the International Space Station and show his videos from that time. He will also reprise his rendition of David Bowie's *Space Oddity*, which he famously sung on his final day on the space station. 7.30pm. £34-£115 (VIP ticket) from atgtickets.com/oxford

Reunion time for United heroes

Players and managers past and present are invited to celebrate 50th anniversary

Kieran Davey
kdavey@nqo.com

The 1973-74 team lined up for the official photograph, inset; action on the pitch with centre half Bob Haynes, main picture

Members of the 1994-95 team, above right; players involved with the side in 2005-2006, top; Bob Haynes, right

FORMER players and managers from Banbury United are invited to join the current generation for a look back at the club's history this week.

The club will be holding a former players' day on January 16 as a celebration of the 50th anniversary of its formation, after the demise of Banbury Spencer Football Club.

To coincide with the club's home game against Larkhall Athletic, former players and managers will have free entry, so they can get together and reminisce about their playing days.

Committee member David Shadbolt said: "Former player days have been successful when tried at other clubs and we are delighted with the response so far.

"A number of players from the 1970s through to more recent times are also coming. The list is growing daily, but we will be delighted to see more.

"Social media and word of mouth will play an important part in getting the word out there and making this day a success so anything you can do to help will be much appreciated by the club."

Those who have confirmed they will be making an appearance include striker Colin Holder who played between 1967 and 1969 and later managed the club in the early 1990s, and centre half Bob Haynes who was a mainstay of the team's back lines in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

They will be joined by the club's record appearance holder Jody McKay, who made 647 appearances and scored 178 goals between 1991 and 2008.

The club will be holding a pre-match buffet at 2.15pm, and there will be a display of photos covering the club's history including team photos. There will also be a bar selling soft drinks and alcoholic beverages.

People interested in attending should e-mail communications@banburyunitedfc.co.uk or call on 07944 671214, and a complimentary pass will be arranged at the gate.

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Intense stories while Oscars buzz begins

Leonardo DiCaprio suffers for his art in a sprawling historical epic bursting with technical vigour, while Brie Larson is outstanding as a imprisoned parent

Leonardo DiCaprio in multi-Golden Globe winner *The Revenant*

***THE REVENANT* (15, 156 mins) A Western with Leonardo DiCaprio, Tom Hardy, Domhnall Gleeson and Will Poulter. Director: Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu**

IF FILM awards were bestowed for dogged determination and perseverance in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds, *The Revenant* would sweep next month's Oscars.

Auteur Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu chose to shoot his sprawling historical epic in chronological order, using natural light.

These bold aesthetic choices limited filming to just a couple of hours each day and when Mother Nature decided to withhold snow from the unforgiving Canadian wilderness, the entire production moved to Argentina at considerable expense.

Tom Hardy was forced to drop out of comic book adventure *Suicide Squad* to accommodate the extended filming schedule, the budget ballooned and one crew member described the mood on set as "a living hell".

But trials and tribulations behind the scenes haven't tarnished Inarritu's audacious vision, because *The Revenant* is a tour-de-force of technical brio and emotionally cold storytelling.

Explosions of violence are graphic and a horrifying bear attack unfolds in a single take that shreds our nerves.

Leonardo DiCaprio puts himself through the wringer for his art. In one stomach-churning scene, the fervent vegetarian eats a bison's liver because the role demands it.

Such unswerving dedication makes him a deserved frontrunner for the Academy Award and has just earned him a Golden Globe.

He plays 19th-century explorer Hugh Glass, who guides a team of fur trappers and hunters under the command of Captain Andrew Henry (Domhnall Gleeson).

The men come under attack from Native Americans led by tribal chief Elk Dog (Duane Howard), whose daughter Powaqa (Melaw Nakehk'o) has been kidnapped.

The interlopers flee for their lives and Glass is injured in a mauling from a grizzly bear.

Henry leaves behind two men, Fitzgerald (Hardy) and Bridger (Will Poulter), to tend to Glass and his son, Hawk (Forrest Goodluck).

Fitzgerald decides to kill Hawk and drags Glass' s near lifeless body into a freshly dug grave. But Glass regains consciousness and vows to hunt down those who killed his boy.

***ROOM* (15, 118 mins) Drama. Brie Larson, Jacob Tremblay and Sean Bridgers. Director: Lenny Abrahamson**

HOME is where the broken hearts are in Lenny Abrahamson's riveting drama.

A young mother and her child are imprisoned in a shed that has been their home since she was abducted at the age of 17.

Brie Larson is sensational as the kidnapped parent, who has sacrificed everything to protect her child from what lies beyond the locked door that opens once a week when their captor delivers limited provisions in exchange for sexual favours.

Equally impressive is seven-year-old Jacob Tremblay as the boy trapped in a nightmare beyond his comprehension.

Ma (Larson) concocts a daring plan to get her son Jack (Tremblay) away, hopefully into the arms of her parents.

Room unfolds largely through the eyes of Jack and, using his innocent perspective, director Abrahamson navigates some choppy emotional waters with sensitivity and skill.

***CREED* (12A, 133 mins) An action/romance with Michael B Jordan, Sylvester Stallone and Tessa Thompson. Director: Ryan Coogler**

ALMOST 40 years since Sylvester Stallone first donned his boxing gloves as Rocky Balboa, the actor delivers an emotional wallop as the retired prizefighter in Ryan Coogler's brooding drama.

It's a glorious return to form for the 69-year-old New Yorker, delivering one of his finest performances for decades as the iconic bruiser who faces a battle of attrition against an invisible adversary.

But, as the film title intimates, Balboa isn't the main attraction.

Instead, writer-director Coogler focuses on a young brawler (Michael B Jordan), whose tragic past is inextricably linked with Rocky's fading glory.

Sadly, the meticulous attention to detail of the fights doesn't extend to the characterisation.

Cake Bookworm

***The Widow* by Fiona Barton, hardback by Bantam Press, £12.99 (ebook £5.99)**

HOTLY tipped as 2016's *The Girl On The Train*, *The Widow* comes with great expectations as this year's unputdownable psychological thriller. Fiona Barton's crime debut is an emotional rollercoaster. Jean Taylor is the titular character and the novel maps her journey as the devoted wife of an accused murderer, Glen. Each chapter is told from a different perspective of those involved, including the sceptical detective, the savvy reporter and the worn-down widow. Barton expertly jumps back and forth between time frames from the date Baby Bella vanished from her garden, to when Jean Taylor is dealing with the repercussions of her husband's sudden death. As the story unfolds, Barton sheds light on the turmoil that Jean faces as the reader discovers her marriage was riddled with problems. It is extraordinary to watch the changes in each character, as new pieces of information are revealed.

***Strictly Between Us* by Jane Fallon, paperback by Penguin, £7.99 (ebook £4.99)**

THIS lively and witty novel tells the story of Tamsin and Michelle, who have been inseparable since childhood and have shared everything together. When singleton Tamsin hears rumours that Michelle's husband is cheating on her, she sets her trusted assistant Bea on a mission to seduce him as a test. Bea, who is reluctant at first, eventually agrees, but as the story moves on, it seems she has her own agenda... This is a fantastic exploration of friendship, infidelity and trust and is pacey, original and really enjoyable. Fallon's characterisation is always spot-on and this book is no different, with well drawn out characters and a tight plot that barrels along towards a brilliant climax.

***The Promise* by Robert Crais, hardback by Orion, £16.99 (ebook £8.99).**

THIS is the 16th novel in Robert Crais's books following LA detectives Elvis Cole and Joe Pike. But this time they are joined by LAPD officer Scott James and his patrol dog Maggie, heroes of his stand-alone novel *Suspect*. The two worlds start to collide when Cole's investigation into the disappearance of a grieving mother leads him to the same house that James is chasing an armed thief into. What James discovers inside the building immediately throws his life into danger, and it is soon in all their best interests that the woman is found. Flitting between narratives, the tension is held taut and the action doesn't stop. With themes of terrorism, war and the nature of loss running throughout, this is a clever tale that is much more than just another thriller. *The Promise* is a far-fetched adrenaline ride.

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Joe Mills was among Banbury's try scorers in the victory against Barkers Butts Picture: Simon Grieve

Bulls stay top as Mills stars

Seven-try success sees Banbury stretch lead

BANBURY increased their lead to three points in Midlands 2 West (South) as they put seven tries past Barkers Butts in a 43-12 victory.

Despite Ken Key's early try, Bulls were 7-5 behind after a converted score for the hosts.

But Banbury responded and led 24-7 at half-time, thanks to a hat-trick of tries.

From a scrum, the Bulls worked a training ground move which saw Jimmy Manley glide through a hole and put top try scorer Joe Mills in for an easy score. Ed Phillips finally found the target to put the Bulls 12-7 ahead.

Simon Brand finished off a rolling maul by touching down, before Carl Daniels claimed the bonus-point try.

It came from a trademark flowing move where man-of-the-match Mills beat two men and committed another pair before slipping Daniels in to score unopposed.

Phillips converted two of the scores.

Both teams were down to 14 men at the start of the second half as Bulls' Manu Paniagua saw yellow.

Phillips converted his own try, before Manley crossed, the former missing with the boot, for a 36-7 lead.

The hosts replied with a score of their own, but Bulls had the last say with Phillips again converting his own try.

Midlands 2 West (South)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Banbury	**12**	**10**	**0**	**2**	**425**	**163**	**51**
Earlsdon	12	10	0	2	358	112	48
Spartans	12	8	0	4	311	145	41
Berkswell & B	12	8	0	4	302	165	41
Pinley	12	8	1	3	211	136	37
Malvern	11	6	0	5	278	208	30
Nuneaton OE	12	5	0	7	235	234	27
Barkers Butts	12	5	1	6	267	276	26
Dunlop	12	5	0	7	166	305	23
Leamington	12	3	0	9	168	327	16
Droitwich	12	1	1	10	126	396	3
Bedworth	11	0	1	10	153	533	-2

United fans fund transfer of Barcelos

FORMER Oxford City striker Felipe Barcelos has joined Evo-Stik Southern League side Banbury United.

The 24-year-old signed for Italian Serie D side ASD Santhia last summer, but tweeted in December he was returning to England due to personal reasons.

The move to Banbury was thanks to the supporters' Spencer Villa Fund, set up to supplement the club's playing budget.

Ford, who signed the Brazilian when in charge at City, said: "This is a great initiative and I have been looking for the right player on which the supporters fund should be used."

Barcelos missed out on his debut last weekend, after the Puritans' game at Tiverton Town was postponed due to a watrerlogged pitch.

He will get an early chance to face City, though, after Banbury were handed a trip to Marsh Lane in the Oxfordshire Senior Cup quarter-final draw.

STARS with Claire Petulengro

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ARIES Mar 21-Apr 19

If close ones are acting strangely towards you this week, it's because you've gone from being really forthright with them, to cutting off communication completely. What you're suffering from is a case of stage fright Aries but, by letting down your defences before Monday, you can achieve all that's ahead of you plus more. Ring now to hear why you can afford to by generous in love.

0906 585 4360

TAURUS Apr 20-May 20

I know you have been feeling sensitive about all that went on in the last seven days, but at least you now know where you stand Taurus. You can afford to make you a priority again. Contact from far away gives you reason to get excited about the summer months this year. Don't worry about a financial misunderstanding. It will be sorted by Friday. Ring now so I can tell you your future.

0906 585 4361

GEMINI May 21-Jun 20

There is a newfound energy in your stars which should help you to look at life as if the glass is half full. You no longer feel the need to tell white lies in order to cover your back in work, but you are the ultimate professional. This is a time to stop preparing and to start doing. You hold the power to impress. Use it well. Ring now to hear why you'll be celebrating this month.

0906 585 4362

CANCER Jun 21-Jul 22

Delays are likely in travel this week, so try to leave yourself with plenty of extra time so you don't damage that reputation you've worked so hard to get for yourself this year. A new challenge in your career is one you're more than capable of achieving. Believe in you and others will too Cancer. Ring now to hear why it's worth checking that emails and messages have got through.

0906 585 4363

LEO Jul 23-Aug 22

What you first thought to be fun flirtations turn out to be serious after all and you shock yourself with the newfound intensity of your feelings. Careful of saying things you don't mean in business. Only make promises you know you can keep. Older people prove more of a responsibility as far as you're concerned, but joint decisions give perfect solutions. Ring now to reach your full potential.

0906 585 4364

VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

I know you have an inner strength which often surprises you. Once you've discovered it, you will soon know that you can achieve anything you set your mind to. Someone cares for you more than you care for them and it's time you created a safe distance between you, so as not to lead them on. Ring now to hear why it's worth doing plenty of overtime in your work at this time.

LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

That lethargic feeling is replaced by one of hope and the knowledge that you can achieve anything you set your mind to. The chance to do something really different with your time this week opens up a whole new range of possibilities for you. Your ruling planet sees you finally admitting what you want from the situation in your life. Ring now to hear whose influence is a negative one.

0906 585 4366

SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

The way you are acting is showing a new vulnerability which, I have to say, I really like Scorpio. Try not to hide your feelings away this week but talk about how you feel. Your smile proves you're taking the right path in life on Friday when you announce decisions which prove you're well and truly back in the driving seat. Ring now to hear how phone calls bring great news to your week.

0906 585 4367

SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

I can see how much you've changed and how much you've grown up in recent months. This is exactly why you're going to be shown newfound respect by those who previously showed impatience and intolerance. From now on, you feel like living every day with love not fear and the past is well and truly behind you. Ring now to hear why you must not repeat other's secrets yet.

0906 585 4368

CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

You've had your emotions messed with and it's no wonder you're unsure of what to do. Remember who you are and what you want. That's what's important now Capricorn. The chance of a getaway to relax should not be turned down. Accept it. Make you a priority please. Ring now to hear why it's worth fighting for what you want in love this week.

0906 585 4369

AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

I can see that life has been more than a little complicated lately, but I can also see that you've got what it takes to achieve anything you set your heart and mind to. Others didn't believe in you because you didn't believe in yourself. Nothing in life is to be feared. It is only to be understood and this week offers you this chance. Phone now to hear how Saturn offers confidence in heaps.

0906 585 4370

PISCES Feb 19-Mar 20

Your sense of humour will serve you well this week as others make you offers which are truly laughable. A new attraction is not what it at first seems. Take it at a slow pace to make sure it is what you really want. Journeys you make for new beginnings promise success and excitement. Miscommunications make Wednesday difficult to handle. Ring now to hear how to juggle life.

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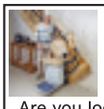

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In brief

- **FORD is to start testing driverless cars on public roads in California, hot on the heels of news that fully automated cars could be legal on the US state's streets in little over a year's time. More than 100 engineers and scientists will run, observe and analyse autonomous hybrid versions of its Fusion, known in Europe as the Mondeo. The team will test interactions between autonomous cars and pedestrians, street sign recognition and more. Ken Washington, Ford vice president for research and advanced engineering, said: "Having a strong presence in Silicon Valley allows us to create real-world mobility solutions."**
- **PROPOSALS to change the driving test will unfairly penalise nervous learners, according to a survey. The idea of requesting a deposit, which is returned to drivers only if they pass, is designed to stop novices putting in for a test before they are ready. But 69 per cent of drivers aged 17 to 25 think this would put extra pressure on those most stressed about the test.**

Milestone vehicle is not a renegade

Auto facts

Model: Jeep Renegade Limited Multijet II 120
Price: £23,495
Insurance group: 12
Fuel consumption (Combined): 64.2pg
Top speed: 111mph
Length: 425.5cm/167.5in
Width: 180.5cm/71in
Luggage capacity: 12.4 cu ft
Fuel tank capacity: 10.5 gallons/48 litres
CO2 emissions: 115g/km
Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles

By David Duffy
david.duffy@nqo.com

AT FIRST glance, the Jeep Renegade might not appear to be a historic vehicle, but in the constantly changing world of car company corporate ownership it is a real milestone.

First, it is Jeep's first all-new model for almost ten years and second it is the first Jeep to be built outside of the United States.

But possibly even more noteworthy is that it is the first vehicle created following Fiat's takeover of the Chrysler Group.

Built in Italy, the Renegade shares its platform with the Fiat 500X and pitches into battle against rivals like the Mini Countryman and Renault Captur.

Physically it is more than a match for its rivals, with its firmly-damped ride and handling giving a sense of real security.

And while it might not possess the sharpest steering, it is comfortable and easy to manage with a definite air of, well, Jeep.

And that is the point.

Because you will happily forgive any minor shortcomings to be part of a marque with a history founded on a spartan, cramped vehicle that became the main light four-wheel-drive vehicle of the Allies during the Second World War and came to personify American determination and ingenuity.

The Jeep's fame dates from its pivotal role in the Second World War

The Renegade is anything but spartan and cramped and, whatever angle you view it from, the distinctive cues of the brand's heritage are there – round headlamps, signature seven-slot grille and trapezoidal wheel arches. Inside there are some nice touches, with the Wrangler-derived grille used as a motif on the speakers and seatbacks, and even the air vents, air-conditioning control and cupholders have a distinctively chunky Jeep feel.

The driving position is easy to adjust and there is plenty of head and leg room.

Priced from about £17,000, the new Jeep is available in four trim levels – Sport, Longitude, Limited and Trailhawk – equipped with a choice of turbo-diesel and petrol engines and available in four-wheel-drive or front-wheel-drive. It has won a Euro NCAP five-star safety rating.

The Renegade will be sold in more than 100 countries – including the United States.

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* Source: Continental Research 2008; 41% respondents stated they used local media as a source of information when looking to buy a car from a private seller. Local media = newspaper websites and supplements.

Name changes for Germans

BOTH Porsche and Mercedes have announced name changes for models in their ranges.

There is nothing unusual in introducing a name for an all-new model, but changing that of an existing range seems odd.

Some companies have been forced into changing names. For instance, Ford opted to drop the Escort name in 1998 when it launched the radically different Focus. The company did not want the lingering reputation that later Escort models had gained for poor quality and woeful used values.

So Ford brought in the Focus and never looked back.

Others have had to change names for more prosaic reasons, such as a name working in one country but not another. Chevrolet had to have a rethink for its Nova when it was launched in Spanish-speaking countries, where it means "no go".

Porsche has decided to rename its Boxster and Cayman ranges as 718 Boxster and 718 Cayman. This seems like a pointless exercise, as most people will just carry on referring to the cars by their previous names.

But there is logic in this thinking, as the German car firm is about to introduce smaller, more efficient four-cylinder engines to the Boxster and Cayman, in place of their existing six-cylinder motors.

Porsche customers expect a certain level of prestige and performance, and six-cylinder engines come with that.

By adding the '718' badge, Porsche can draw on an extensive history of 718 racing cars from the Fifties and Sixties. These early racers enjoyed considerable success at race tracks, so it's easy for Porsche to say the Boxster and Cayman are following in some illustrious wheel tracks.

For Mercedes, replacing the SLK badge with the SLC is a tougher sell. The SLK has established itself as a sleek compact roadster. Swapping to SLC appears to be abandoning the heritage simply to revive a name last used in the 1980s.

The original SLC was launched in the Seventies, as a coupe version of the long-running R107 generation of the SL roadster. While the SLC was a good car and even enjoyed some modest motorsport success, it is not one of Merc's most instantly recognisable names.

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